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Effect of Mentorship and Role Modeling Programs on Early Pregnancy Prevention among Secondary School Girls in Homa Bay Sub-County

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ABSTRACT

Unintended pregnancy among adolescents represents an important public health challenge in developed and developing countries. Numerous prevention strategies have been employed by countries across the world, in an effort to address this problem. However, many girls still cannot complete school due to early pregnancies. The purpose of the study was to examine the effect of mentorship and role modeling programs on pregnancy prevention among secondary school girls in Homa Bay Sub-County. The study adopted a

descriptive survey research design and guided by the feminist theory. The study was carried in girls' schools and mixed schools only because students in boys' schools only are not directly affected by the phenomenon under study. Questionnaires and interview schedules were used for the purpose of collecting data. Two sets of questionnaires were administered for the heads of guidance and counseling department and the class teachers. Interview schedules were administered to the principals and the sub-county director of education. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequencies and percentages while the interview schedule was analyzed thematically according to the objectives of the study. The study revealed that there were mentors who encourage students to work hard in their education and that the schools had alumni of prominent women that the students can look up to. The schools arrange regular mentorship programmes that enable students to meet with their mentors and share ideas, though this was not the case in some schools in the sub-county. The findings also indicate that in schools where mentorship was witnessed, the number of girls proceeding with their studies without getting pregnant and join institutions of higher learning had increased. The findings of the study will be used to make recommendations toward strategies of averting the problem of unplanned and unwanted pregnancies and attainment of educational equity.

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Introduction

Globally as educational aspirations rise in both developed and developing countries, early childbearing among schoolgirls has been perceived as a social problem as it often leads to a premature end to many young women's educational careers. Among the 28 OECD countries, approximately 1.25 million teenage school girls become pregnant each year. Of these 60% become mothers annually affecting their educational pursuits (UNICEF, 2001). In the US for example, 9% of adolescents between the ages 15 to 19 years become pregnant each year, and about half of these pregnancies end up affecting their school programs where they are forced to differ their education or some stop further educational efforts (Darroch et al, 2016). In India, adolescent pregnancies constitute 19% of the total fertility resulting in early marriages and end educational efforts (Mehra, 2004) and an Israeli study estimated the incidence of teenage pregnancy to be 32 per 1000 schoolgirls in the country (Sikron, 2003). Adolescent mothers are more likely to perform poorly in school, come from low socio-economic homes and less advantageous environment; are themselves children of mothers with limited school education and history of unintended teenage pregnancies (Elfebein, 2003). Adolescents who have an unintended pregnancy face a number of challenges, including inability to complete school education (which ultimately limits their future social and economic opportunities), and increased adverse pregnancy outcomes among others (Kosunen, 2002; Phipps, 2002; Koniak-Griffin, 2001; Henshaw, 2000; Moore, 1993; Upchurch, 1990). This has served as one of the major causes of gender inequity in education globally. It is also notable that early pregnancies are a phenomenon that only affects girls despite the fact that it is caused by both sexes.

Unintended pregnancy among adolescents represents an important public health challenge in developed and developing countries. Numerous prevention strategies such as health

education, skills-building and improving accessibility to contraceptives have been employed by countries across the world, in an effort to address this problem (Oringanje, 2010). Many technical and political agencies at the global, regional, national and local levels have been implementing a variety of interventions. The diverse approaches tend to address a wide range of factors related to unintended pregnancies among adolescents. The goals of these agencies include, among others: helping adolescents to change psychosocial risk and protective factors involving sexuality; increasing teens' knowledge about risks and consistent safe use of contraceptives; and skills training to support their social inclusion and personal development. While single interventions were not found to be effective, combinations of interventions to improve education and contraceptive access were found to reduce unintended pregnancies among adolescents (Scher, Maynard & Stagner, 2006). Despite all these efforts, many girls still cannot complete school due to early pregnancies.

Kenyan statistics indicate that approximately 1300 girls drop out of school every year due to pregnancy (Sifuma, 2014). Further statistics indicate that 26 in every 100 girls in Kenya are married before they reach 18 years most profoundly due to early pregnancy. These young marriages are highest in the former North Eastern Province, Coast Province and Nyanza province with Kilifi and Homabay counties at the top of the list. Although gender disparity has reduced in Kenya, pregnancy still poses a challenge on the advancement towards gender parity (Ogaro, 2008), hence the need to conduct a study and analyze the effect of mentorship and role modeling programs on pregnancy prevention among secondary school girls in Homa Bay Sub-County.

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey design. There were 62 public secondary schools

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in the sub-county in which 59 are public girls' schools and public mixed schools. For the purpose of this study, data was collected from the mixed and girls public secondary schools only. The target number of schools was therefore 59 public secondary schools. Data was collected from principals, class teachers, heads of Guidance and Counselling and students.

The sub-county education officer, Principals and the heads of counselling departments were selected using purposive sampling because only one person holds such a position in the area they represent. The class teachers and the students were selected through simple random sampling

technique where 4 teachers and 20 students were selected for the study. This ensured that comprehensive information is gathered. The data collection instruments that were used to collect data from the selected respondents were questionnaires and interview schedules. The data collected was analyzed qualitatively (thematic) and quantitatively (descriptive statistics). The descriptive statistics that was used include frequencies and percentages. Data was presented in frequency tables. Qualitative data collected through the use of interview schedules were discussed thematically according to the objectives of the study.

Results

Cases of Pregnancy

The students were asked to state whether they had ever witnessed any case of pregnancy among girls in the school where they were studying. The responses are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Cases of Pregnancy

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	277	78.7
No	75	21.3
Total	352	100.0

As revealed in Table 1, majority (78.7%) of the students agreed that they had witnessed cases of pregnancy in their schools, whereas 21.3 % (75) disagreed. This is an indication that there are pregnancy cases among the girls in the schools where the study was carried.

The class teachers were also asked to state whether they have witnessed any cases of pregnancy among girls in the schools where they were teaching. The results are presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Teachers Responses on Cases of Pregnancy

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	66	89.2
No	8	10.8
Total	74	100.0

Table 2 shows that 89.2% (66) of the class teachers had witnessed cases of pregnancy among girls in their respective schools. Only 10.8% (8) had a contrary response. They were further asked to state whether the girls who were pregnant finally completed their studies. The responses are shown in Table 3.

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Table 3 Whether the Girls Who Were Pregnant Finally Completed their Studies

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	59	79.7
No	15	20.3
Total	74	100.0

The findings shown in Table 3 indicate that 79.7% (59) of the class teachers who participated in this study stated that the girls who were pregnant were able to complete their studies. However, 20.3 % (15) stated that the girls were not able to complete their studies. As for what the class teachers did to assist them to complete their studies, Table 4 shows that 51.4% (38) of the teachers encouraged the girls to continue with their studies while 31.1%(23) advised the girls on how to pursue their studies even after giving birth and 17.6%(13) had discussion with the girls. A gender and education policy developed in 2003 makes provision for re-admission of girls who become pregnant while in school. However the policy does not stipulate punitive measures for principles that refuse to re-admit these girls. The county director of education indicated that at present there are no figures for the girls who seek re-admission and have been denied. It is likely that when they are denied they just stay out of school and no advocacy is sought.

Table 4 What the Class Teachers Do to Assist Girls to Complete their Studies

Response	Frequency	%
Encouraging them	38	51.4
Advise	23	31.1
Discussion	13	17.6
Total	74	100.0

Effect of Mentorship and Role Modeling Programs on Pregnancy Prevention

The study sought to assess the effect of mentorship and role modeling programs on early pregnancy prevention among secondary girls in Homa-Bay Sub-County. The students' responses are presented in Table 5.

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Table 5 Students' Responses on the Effect of Mentorship and Role Modeling Programs on Early Pregnancy Prevention

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		Total	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
There are mentors who encourage us to work hard in our education	222	63.1	79	22.4	4	1.1	29	8.2	18	5.1	352	100
The school has an alumni of prominent women that we can look up to	152	43.2	87	24.7	13	3.7	37	10.5	63	17.9	352	100
The school arranges regular mentorship programs that enables us to meet with our mentors and shares ideas	142	40.3	98	27.8	9	2.6	46	13.1	57	16.2	352	100
Mentorship programs have seen many of us proceed with our studies without getting pregnant	132	37.5	103	29.3	29	8.2	28	8.0	60	17.0	352	100
Mentorship programs have seen the number of girls joining institution of higher learning increase	180	51.1	77	21.9	15	4.3	35	9.9	45	12.8	352	100

Findings in Table 5 shows that majority (85.5%) of the students agreed that there were mentors who encourage them to work hard in their education while 13.3% (47) disagreed. Majority (67.9%) of the students stated that the school had an alumna of prominent women that they can look upto. Only 28.4% (100) disagreed. Further, 68.1 % (240) of the students stated that the school arranges regular mentorship programmes that enable them to meet with their mentors and share ideas but 29.3 % (103) disagreed. Another 66.8% (235) stated that mentorship programmes had seen many of them proceed with studies without getting pregnant whereas 25% (88) disagreed. Majority (63%) of the students agreed that mentorship

programmes had seen the number of students joining institutions of higher learning increase. The other 22.7 % (80) disagreed.

The students were asked to state whether mentorship has assisted in reducing the rate of pregnancy among girls in the school, the results reveal that majority (74.7%) of the students were of the opinion that mentorship and role modeling had helped in reducing the rate of pregnancy among girls in the schools. The other 25.3 % (89) were of different opinion. The responses are shown in Table 6.

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Table 6 Whether Mentorship and Role Modeling has Helped Reduce Pregnancies

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	263	74.7
No	89	25.3
Total	352	100.0

Teacher's responses concerning the effect of mentorship and role modeling on pregnancy prevention among secondary school girls in Homa Bay Sub-County is shown in Table 7.

Table 7: Teachers' Responses on the Effect of Mentorship and Role Modeling Programs on Pregnancy Prevention

Statement	SA		A		U		D		SD		Total	
	f	%	f	%	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
The school offer mentors to the girls for their education	11	14.9	36	48.6	5	6.8	6	8.1	16	21.6	74	100.0
The school has an alumnae of prominent women that we can look up to	11	14.9	34	45.9	7	9.5	6	8.1	16	21.6	74	100.0
The school arranges annual mentorship programs that enables the students to meet with their mentors and shares ideas	8	10.8	37	50.0	8	10.8	10	13.5	11	14.9	74	100.0
Mentorship programs have seen many girls complete schools without getting pregnant	14	18.9	30	40.5	11	14.9	6	8.1	13	17.6	74	100.0
Mentorship programs have seen the number of girls joining institution of higher learning increase	10	13.5	31	41.9	14	18.9	6	8.1	13	17.6	74	100.0

As indicated in Table 7, 63.5% (47) of the class teachers agreed that the school offers mentorship to the girls for their education, while 29.7% (22) disagreed. Over half (60.8%) of the teachers stated that the schools have alumni of prominent women that the girls can look up to. Only 29.7% (22) disagreed. The findings also show that 60.8% (45) of the class teachers stated that the school arranges annual mentorship programs that enables the students to meet with their mentors and share ideas. The class

teachers' responses are in line with the responses provided by the HODs guidance and counseling and the principals who were interviewed. Majority of the HODs asserted that the schools had mentorship programmes specifically for girls that were geared towards alleviating pregnancy cases among school girls. Some of the mentoring activities include using successful 'old girls' to act as mentors to encourage the girls to get focused on their studies. The HODs said that mentorship

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programmes that were organized in the schools were effective though there was need to allocate more time for mentoring activities. This is because the students get the message very well when they are told by people they consider as successful in the society.

Mentorship programs have seen many girls complete school without getting pregnant as stated by 59.4% (44) of the respondents. The

remaining 25.7% (19) disagreed. It is also indicated that 55.4% (41) of the teachers stated that mentorship programs has seen the number of girls joining institution of higher learning increase while 25.7% (19) the class teachers were also asked to state whether the mentorship program have been effective. The results are shown in Table 8.

Table 8 Teachers' Responses on Whether Mentorship Programs was Effective

Response	Frequency	%
Yes	58	78.4
No	16	21.6
Total	74	100.0

As shown in Table 8, 78.4% (58) of the class teachers stated that the mentorship programs in their institution are effective. Only 21.6% (16) stated that they are not effective. The principals who were interviewed were of similar opinion. They were in agreement that mentorship programs were effective in controlling pregnancy cases among school-going girls in the area where the study was done. This implies that if the mentorship programs are well implemented, the pregnancy cases among girls will reduce drastically.

Discussion

Traditionally, mentoring programs have been used as an intervention to address a specific youth problem such as school drop-out rates, youth violence, adolescent pregnancy, and drug and alcohol use (Beier, Walter, Spitalny, Zansky & Bontempo, 2000). This targeted intervention strategy focuses on solving problems, providing adult guidance to both influence those adolescents engaged in the risky behavior and prevent the problem behavior. Further, as a

public policy tool, mentoring is a positive youth intervention that reduces risky and negative behavior (Catalano, Berglund, Jeanne, Lonczak & Hawkins, 1998). The study sought to establish the effect of mentorship and role modeling programs on pregnancy prevention among secondary school girls in Homa Bay Sub County. In a study by Rauner (2000), teen mothers reported that their mentors influenced their educational plans, and envisioned themselves in a job or career-related situation in five years. They reported that they had received assistance with problem solving and decision-making, and had improved their self-esteem and ability to persevere.

The current study revealed that majority (85.5%) of the students and 63.5% of the class teachers agreed that there were mentors who encourage students to work hard in their education while 67.9 % of the students and 60.8% of the teachers stated that the school had alumni of prominent women that the students can look up to. As per Koroknay-Palicz, Montalvao and Seban (2014),

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due to mentoring, the number of girls who became pregnant in their teen decreased considerably as many were encouraged to delay the initiation of sex and increase the use of protection. The girls were also able to voice their concern and influence each through sharing their views and their level of decision-making power increased as their self-esteem was built up.

The schools arrange regular mentorship programmes that enable students to meet with their mentors and share ideas (68.1 % of students and 60.8% of the teachers). Generally, majority (66.8%) of the students stated that mentorship programmes had seen many of them proceed with studies without getting pregnant and 63% of the students agreed that mentorship programmes had seen the number of students joining institutions of higher learning increase. This is in agreement with a study done by Koroknay-Palicz, Montalvao and Seban (2014) who established that secondary school completion rate increased with the mentoring programs as more girls went even to tertiary institutions.

The findings show that 74.7% of the students and 78.4% of the teachers stated that mentorship and role modeling had helped in reducing the rate of pregnancy among girls in the schools. This implies that if the mentorship programs are

well implemented, the pregnancy cases among girls will reduce drastically. Mentoring programs are a very effective investment in reducing teen pregnancies and other youth problems and would like to see the number of programs increased. This assertion is supported by a study by Herrera, Sipe, McClanahan, Arbretton and Pepper (2000) that concluded that a wide range of youth development approaches, including mentoring, result in improved behavior changes (in interpersonal skills and relationships, self-control and academic achievement) and in reduced problem behaviors (such as drug use, pregnancy, aggressive behavior, and truancy).

Conclusion

Based on the findings of the study, it can be concluded that there were mentors who encourage students to work hard in their education and that the schools had alumni of prominent women that the students can look up to. The schools arrange regular mentorship programmes that enable students to meet with their mentors and share ideas, though this was not the case in some schools in the sub-county. The findings also indicate that in schools where mentorship was witnessed, the number of girls proceeding with their studies without getting pregnant and join institutions of higher learning had increased.

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